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Site-specific landscape architectural approaches in contemporary European harbour transformation

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This paper starts from the frustrating observation that all too often in the western world we face the problem of urban reintegration of harbour wastelands by a kind of global same-same answer that replaces old harbour sites by new economy or branding driven developments, including sometimes the preservation of a few single relics of the former port considered of historic value. In search of alternative approaches, and starting from a critical review of Copenhagen's current harbour transformation, this paper sketches out theories of 'site' in order to elaborate a framework of analysis. It then looks into four selected European projects characterized by their landscape architectural approaches, from which a set of disciplinary methods for site-specific design is detected, invoking an understanding of design as transformation, and site as transscalar.

Keywords
Harbour transformation, site-specificity, site theories, landscape architecture, design as transformation, transscalar site

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Introduction

The transformation of derelict port areas and port-related industrial wasteland has been addressed as a global problem since the 80s, with the London Docklands as the predecessor for many other European urban development projects aiming at reintegrating these abandoned areas into the urban realm (Fig. 1). A quarter century of harbour transformation has brought about many built and drawn up examples, especially in the western world. A recent survey of European port cities, initiating a PhD research project by the author of this paper at the University of Copenhagen[1], questions why even if the port cities hosting these projects vary tremendously in size, geography, climate, culture and other contexts, the majority of their harbour transformation projects look very much the same, often translate the same kind of programme into the same kind of newly built spaces on formerly cleared port grounds as a globally applicable answer to a global question, as if there were a recipe of how to turn ashes into gold. This global approach often starts from a tabula rasa, wiping out the "ashes", and results in a complete make-over, creating new "gold".

Fig. 1. London Docklands, Canary Wharf: A global answer to a global problem.
(Photo: Lisa Diedrich 2010)

[1] PhD project "Landscape architectural approaches to site-specificity in contemporary European harbour transformation projects", by Lisa Diedrich, Copenhagen University. Starting from a critical review of Copenhagen's current harbour transformation projects, this PhD thesis opens up the view onto contemporary port transformation projects in Europe. It focuses on those featuring landscape architectural approaches and aims at finding out how landscape architects perceive and design these extensive, often built-up derelict areas not from scratch but with regard to existing components. The objective is to unravel theories and methods for site-specific design proposed by landscape architecture.

However, today there is an interest, especially from the discipline of landscape architecture, to put forward alternative – and more site-specific – answers to this question, challenging the assumption that each site be qualified as ashes, and each make-over as gold, regardless of local particularities. Indeed has the same survey of European port cities brought about a collection of derelict harbour sites of very different locational qualities, confronting us with the issue if we really want to erase all we find on site for the sake of a new design starting from scratch, or if we would not better address the existing site as a collection of specific values that have the potential to kick off a process of further qualification through preservation and development. Consequently, the survey of European port cities leads into a search for examples of landscape architectural answers that would derive from the premise that a reuse and transformation of derelict sites presents some advantages over a total redesign, as reuse is counteracting homogenisation, it is supporting a cultural climate that values the multilayered, heterogeneous and complex, and it has resource saving effects in ecology and (partly) economy (Braae/ Diedrich 2012).

To make a start in exploring the state of the art of site-specific harbour transformation in Europe, Copenhagen's ongoing transformation projects have been examined. This city's port has been developed in the past to both sides of the harbour that crosses today's city centre like a river. The port has abandoned its original installations since the 80s. Since then, Copenhagen has actively been transforming its former port sites and is continuing to do so, always according to the state of the art of the respective time – the city could easily be qualified as a showcase for a quarter century of harbour development, presenting a nearly complete genealogy in built form, with an accent, since the last decade, on avant-garde architectural and urban design approaches that take site-specific aspects into consideration (Fig. 2). However, no major landscape architectural approach has so far been part of the collection.

Fig. 2. Copenhagen harbour transformation, an architectural approach: Royal Playhouse and Opera. (Photo: Lisa Diedrich 2010)

The author's research is therefore motivated by the idea that landscape architectural approaches could enrich the professional knowledge and the common planning practice of those involved in harbour transformation – in Copenhagen but also elsewhere – because of a particular landscape architectural understanding of site-specificity, and that these approaches might suggest alternatives to the global same-same answers. In a first step, the research has detected contemporary port transformation projects in Europe featuring major landscape architectural approaches: Oslo-Bjørvika, Hamburg-Elbinsel, Amsterdam-IJoevers, Rotterdam Water City 2035, Antwerp-Scheldt Quays, Antwerp/Beveren-ReCreated Nature, Basel-Novartis St. Johann Campus, Nantes-Ile de Nantes, Bordeaux-Les Quays, Bordeaux-Left Bank, Marseille-Euroméditerranée 2, Barcelona-Barceloneta.

In the context of the ongoing PhD research, these cases feed a qualitative comparative analysis and are assessed according to two methods: "site scannings", an experience-based method for on-site exploration developed by the author, and Malene Hauxner's Work and Context Analysis, an academic method for the evaluation of artistic work (Hauxner 2010a). The research then investigates how landscape architects are designing the derelict port areas with particular attention to the site, and it looks into definitions of site and site-specificity. Its aim is to unravel theories and methods for site-specific design proposed by landscape architecture. In this paper, a short presentation of site theories leads to the definition of an analytical grid according to which four selected projects are examined: two big scale and two small scale ones, the big scale ones characterized by the preservation of major parts of the elements found on site (Nantes-Ile de Nantes, and Marseille-Euroméditerranée 2), and the small scale ones featuring a tabula rasa and a new design (Basel-Novartis, and Antwerp Scheldt Quays). The paper ends with proposing insights into the design approaches and methods found in these projects and sketches out two basic conditions for site-specific design as observed in landscape architecture.

Site theories

Introducing a pragmatic framework

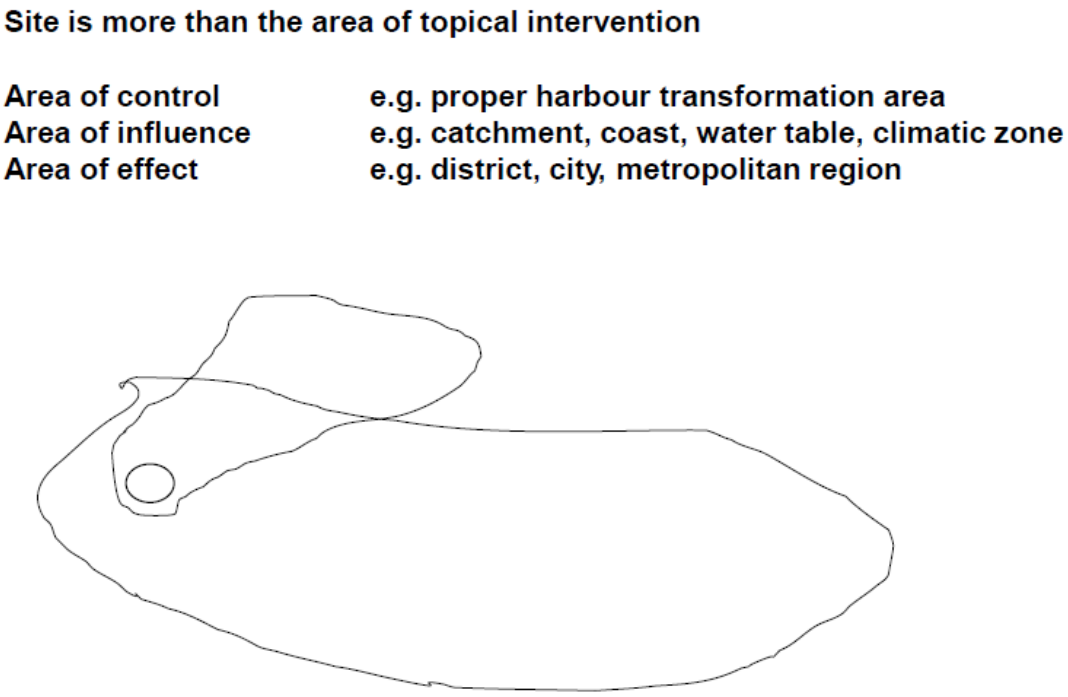
Many designers, be they architects, landscape architects or urban planners, have referred to site as a paramount issue for their work in the last decade (Hvattum 2010), and the notion is increasingly discussed in design theory. In landscape architectural theory, the understanding of site has undergone changes but still widely relies on two competing theoretical positions, namely essentialism and positivism. The current PhD research is positioned beyond these two, overcoming essentialist tendencies on the one hand, as defined by Christian Norberg-Schulz' *Genius Loci* of 1979, or by Kenneth Frampton's *Critical Regionalism* of 1983, and positivistic tendencies on the other, as developed in Ian McHarg's *Design with Nature* of 1969, or in Rem Koolhaas' *Generic City* of 1995 (Braae/Diedrich 2011). This research refers to a third theoretical position characterized by a pragmatic framework which identifies site as a dynamic relational construct (Burns/Kahn 2005) and site-specificity as relational specificity (Kwon 2002).

Site as transscalar

The US American architecture scholars Carol Burns and Andrea Kahn have elaborated on the basic question of what constitutes a site in design. If in popular language a site is the ground on which something takes place, a site in a design context is first of all the area a designer receives from a client in order to shape it. In this respect, it is given and has clear boundaries. However, when starting to explore a site, the designer's interest generally shifts to aspects that connect the delimited area of intervention with larger systems, and the designer's creative act often introduces elements that have an influence beyond the site itself. Kahn and Burns therefore speak of three distinct areas of site. The first, the most obvious one, is the *area of control* – it corresponds to the site within its property lines. The

second is called the *area of influence* – it comprises systems and forces that act upon the given site even if they do not take place within its boundaries. The third finally is the *area of effect* – defining the domains beyond the given site that are impacted by design (Burns/Kahn 2005). In the context of harbour transformation, the area of control depicts the proper project area, the area of influence comprehends larger zones beyond the project area such as a catchment, a coastline, a water table, a climatic zone, finally the area of effect involves again broader realms such as a district, a city, a whole metropolitan region (Fig 3).

Fig. 3. Site as area of control, influence, effect (drawing: Lisa Diedrich)



Site as a dynamic relational construct/ site specificity as relational specificity

The term site-specificity was first coined in the arts in the 1960s and 70s, as evolving from a phenomenological-experiential understanding (site as an agglomeration of physical attributes) and changing its meaning many times since. The US American art historian Miwon Kwon (2002) therefore invites for a redefinition of site-specificity while thinking together seemingly opposed ideas: the nostalgic desire of a retrieval of rooted, place-bound identities, and the anti-nostalgic embrace of a nomadic fluidity of subjectivity, identity and spatiality. She is bridging the gap in relying on a pragmatic, constructivist idea of site being construed and constructed by the artist from relational sensibility.

Introducing this understanding into the disciplines of architecture, landscape architecture, urban design and urban planning, the US American architecture scholars Carol Burns and Andrea Kahn define site as a dynamic relational construct: Designers "construe and construct" site from an exchange between what they see in front of them and what they wish to have there, between ideas from outside (the physical site) and inside (disciplinary norms, personal convictions, societal ideals), between the real as observed and the real as defined (Burns/Kahn 2005: xv). They distinguish between "site thinking" – general and proper to every discipline or designer, and "thinking about a site" – the specific plot of land with its various conditions. As they argue "(…) a specific locale provides the material ground for action in design practice, and the designers' ideas about site provide a

theoretical background against which design actions are taken" (Burns/ Kahn 2005: viii). Invoking this approach, the present hypothesis is that one can learn about the designers' general "site thinking" and hence get information on site-specificity through the analysis of their actual "thinking about a site", i.e. through the assessment of topical design projects. In other words, the designers' "writing"/"editing" of a site can elucidate their "reading" of a site (Braae/ Diedrich 2011).

Design as site interpretation

Transporting this site understanding into landscape architecture, the US American scholar Elizabeth Meyer (2005) examines the site-thinking of American landscape architects of the pre-modern and post-modern eras. She notices "site reading and editing strategies" that confirm how far these landscape architects are from seeing sites as empty canvases. They rather perceive them as existing situations rich in all kind of material and non-material, i.e. "full of spaces, nature and history, whose latent forms and meanings can be made apparent and palpable, through design" (Meyer 2005: 102). Meyer also observes that the own personal immersion of the designers into site is crucial to their thinking about the site, as a strong conceptual beginning for their design response. With Meyer, we point out that this partly rational, partly affective site approach questions the division, inherited from modernism, between a scientific site analysis and a conceptual design act, as the designers tend to synthesize these intellectual movements into one creative act: "design as site interpretation, and site as program, not surface for program" (Meyer 205: 93).

Design as transformation

If design is understood as site interpretation we can explain why the designer share a strong interest in capturing all the existing elements and all aspects associated to them, in other words to approach the site "as found" in order to transform it rather than to design it anew. In this respect, the Danish landscape architectural scholar Ellen Braae introduces the notion of transformation, defining it as a process in the course of which something is changed from one state into another. "Transformation in a design perspective is a situation when something is changed from one state to another – relating that former *something* to the new *something else* knowing that neither before nor after is static. The art of transformation is basically hermeneutical and is closely linked to the existing, and hence indirectly involves theories of preservation in these discussions, as well as the question about the relation between past, present and future." (Braae/ Diedrich 2012) Understanding design as transformation can be particularly useful in the current debate of how to reintegrate derelict port areas, once belonging to the realm of industrial production, into the urban realm as this requires not only shifts in spatial terms but also changes in terms of programme and connectivity. The traditional urban planning practice of defining a programme which is applied to a site is complemented here by another approach stemming from landscape architectural theory (Marot 2003) that aims at developing a programme from site.

Approaching a site through all the facets of what exists already calls for a theoretical foundation, to discover within the philosophical discourse about authenticity, which stands central in restoration and preservation theory (Viollet-le-Duc 2000, Ruskin 1849) and should equally occupy a paramount position in any site-specificity research. The current research project again proposes to overcome two widely accepted yet classically contrasting philosophical strands of thought: the search for the origin, object-related and structuralist, and the search for memories, narratives and bodily experiences, subject-related and phenomenological. In order to inform theories on landscape architectural design, motivated by both object and subject related considerations, a third position seems appropriate, bridging the gap and putting forward a pragmatic understanding of authenticity as an affective-reflective non-hierarchic approach to all kinds of material and immaterial aspects "found on site" (Braae/ Diedrich 2012, Braae 2012).

Evaluating site-specificity and transformation

The above reflections constitute the theoretical base from which a set of landscape architectural criteria has been synthesized in order to set up the analytical grid for the evaluation of current harbour transformation projects (Fig. 4).

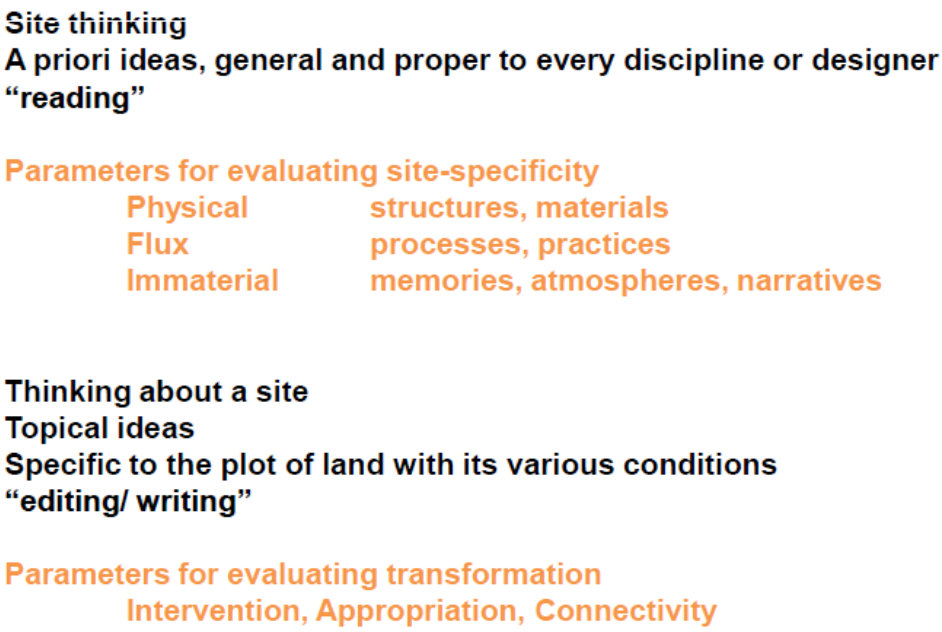
Site-specificity/ Site Thinking

Deduced from restoration theory, a total of seven parameters – physical ones (structure, material), flux ones (processes, practices), and immaterial ones (memory, atmosphere, narrative) – are defined for examining landscape architectural site-specificity and for revealing the designers' general site thinking, i.e. their a priori ideas, general and proper to every discipline or designer. This site thinking gives insight in how designers construe their sites – it informs about the "reading" of site.

Transformation/ Thinking about a Site

Extracted from transformation theory, 'intervention', 'appropriation', and 'connectivity' are defined as the parameters for investigating about the landscape architectural transformation and the designers' particular thinking about the site, i.e. their topical ideas, specific to the plot of land with its various conditions. This thinking about the site elucidates how designers construct their sites – it informs about the "writing" or "editing" of site.

Fig. 4. An analytical grid for the evaluation of site-specificity and transformation (table: Lisa Diedrich)



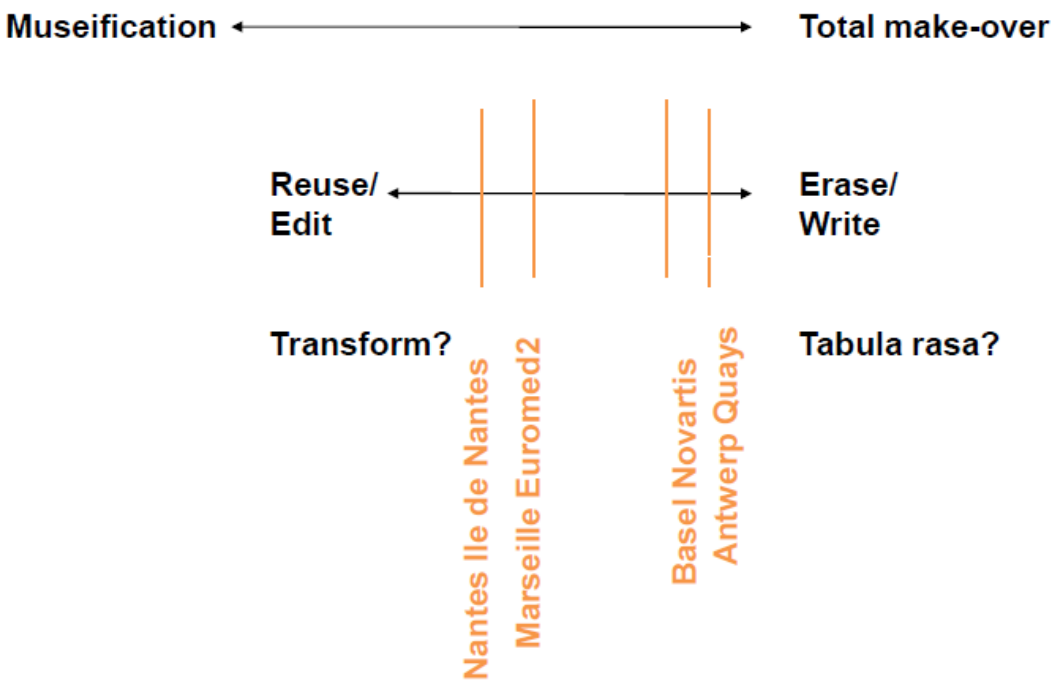
Transformation vs Tabula rasa?

In this paper, four harbour transformation projects are assessed according to the above sketched analytical framework. Two of them are obvious transformation projects that defeat a tabula rasa approach from their very start because of their sheer size that does not allow for an overall erasure and new design – in the case of Nantes-Ile de Nantes 330 hectares of urbano-industrial fabric are concerned, and 169 hectares in the case of

Marseille-Euromediterranée 2. How do the designers develop their site-specific design, and how do they transform their sites?
The two other projects are chosen because they simply had to make do with a tabula rasa – when the landscape architects were commissioned the port grounds were already cleared or the decision taken. Their smaller project areas would definitely allow for a complete make-over, 63 000 square metres in the case of Basel-Novartis Campus Park and 23 000 square metres in the case of Antwerp Scheldt Quays. How do the designers establish site-specific design under the condition of starting from scratch, do they still address their sites under transformative aspects, and if so how?

If one draws a scale reaching from total museification to complete make-over, one should be able to rank the four projects on it (Fig. 5). Before evaluation one tends to situate Nantes and Marseille in the middle of the scale, whereas Basel and Antwerp would stand in close proximity to the make-over pole. This idea will be scrutinized in the following analysis.

Fig. 5. Transformation vs. tabula rasa? (table: Lisa Diedrich)



Case 1: Nantes-Ile de Nantes

In this project (Fig. 6) the site is read as an urban-industrial river island under constant development, built from various fragments of the industrial and post-industrial times. Landscape architect and architect Alexandre Chemetoff puts forward a pragmatic approach, according to his principle of the ”economy of means”: He preserves as much as possible, and eliminates as few as possible of what is found on site, regardless of when and why and for what it has been installed. The findings at the Île de Nantes project area include all kinds of present structures, materials, practices and atmospheres, complete with their manifold inherent references. The single object is far less important than the relationship of all kinds of components with each other.

The project area is meticulously surveyed in order to accurately position acupuncture-like interventions, a pointillism of transformative action. The strategy consists in considering

the site as a steadily transforming environment whose stages of change are monitored regularly in order to define the next set of acupunctural interventions based on the results of the previous ones. The transformation process does not aim at reaching a predefined image but is conceived as an open-ended dialogue between the site, the designer and various other actors, over a long time span – an evolutive design, which consists of exploring, detecting and collecting, analysing and evaluating. The landscape architect is more an expedition guide than a classical designer. He is less writing and rather editing the existing site as an ever evolving conglomerate of relationships, an open-ended system in which the architectural language is reduced to almost invisible.

Fig. 6. Nantes/ Ile de Nantes (Photo: Lisa Diedrich 2010)
This project is part of a long term urban renovation enterprise of the industralised island in river Loire, of 330 hectares, situated to the South of Nantes' historic centre. In the course of history, several islands of the meandering river had been merged by land fill, first to host residential districts of the extending historic city, later for installing port activities and naval industries. With the creation of a new port in St Nazaire in 19th century, closer to the sea and not threatened by the silting river, Ile de Nantes' industries fell into decay and recently started to accommodate spontaneous uses, from parking cars to artistic events and workshops. The masterplan for the transformation of the Ile de Nantes has been defined through a competition held in 1999, won by the team of landscape architects and architects Alexandre Chemetoff/ Jean-Louis Bertomieu. Instead of a classical masterplan, Alexandre Chemetoff and his Atelier de l'Ile de Nantes have been proposing an evolutive "plan guide", which he has been carrying out from 2000 to 2010.

Case 2: Marseille-Euromediterranée 2

The site is read twofold, pointing at two structures – an urban axis and the landform of a valley. Even if the site is covered all over with port-related industries, settlements and infrastructure, testimonies of the industrial past, the architects/landscape architects of the team Francois Leclercq, Agence Ter, Rémy Marciano, Jacques Sbriglio, SETEC

focus on structures, materials, memories and atmospheres that translate the references to a historic urban axis coastwise and of a pastoral Mediterranean landscape landwise (Fig. 7). Coastwise, the designers read the site as part of the industrial port city, landwise they identify it as part of the rural Provence landscape. They edit the site accordingly: On the coast, they create a promenade as an urban balcony by covering the motorway that obstructs the panoramic view of the port landscape. In the hinterland, they rebuild a river valley as a park from the relics of the preindustrial Mediterranean countryside, re-opening the river and freeing it from derelict railways. Furthermore, they pay tribute to the natural processes – the valley is part of the bigger catchment area of the Aygalades river and seasonally inundated, due to an undersized discharge system in the underground which they plan to replace by a floodable open hydraulic structure – the park.

The designers preserve most of the vast area and plan to upgrade its built-up stock step by step, which leaves opportunities to appropriate the interventions over time. They bracket this extensive site in between two bold linear interventions of renewal, the seaside promenade and the floodable river park. Attentive to structural issues, they recreate two strings of a once existing, but today inoperative urban ladder structure, while also reparing a miscalculated hydraulic feature. Attentive to atmospherical issues at the same time, they provide for sensuous experiences both on the promenade and in the park. These interventions derive from the consideration of a larger area of influence, namely the catchment of Aygalades river and the North-South crossing of the city, and they radiate out into an again larger area of effect, here the Marseille-Provence metropolis. In fact, this case demonstrates how a precise intervention in selected parts of the area of control produces considerable outcome at a much larger scale. Design here consists of detecting, curing and cultivating precise neuralgic points of the urban metabolism, and the role of the landscape architects can be described as precise surger and sensitive reeducator.

Fig. 7. Marseille/ Euromediterranée 2 (Drawing: Francois Leclercq with Agence Ter, Rémy Marciano, Jacques Sbriglio, SETEC)
This project is the second phase of the large scale urban transformation project Euromediterranée, initiated in the late 90s by the French state in order to revitalize the port city of Marseille. The first phase, Euromediterranée 1, is under construction since 2000, renovating and restructuring the northern part of the city centre situated behind the active port and composed of run-down areas of formerly port-related industries and settlements. Euromed2 comprises the terrain to the north of Euromed1, 169 hectares that are similarly stretching out from the coast occupied by the port towards the valley of a water course, Aygalades river, which is covered and occupied by a derelict railyard. The urban development plan for Euromed2 stems from a competition held in 2009, won by the team of architects and landscape architects Francois Leclercq with Agence Ter, Rémy Marciano, Jacques Sbriglio and SETEC.

Case 3: Basel-Novartis Campus Park

In this project, the site is read as a total artifice evolving on a tabula rasa – St. Johann harbour is abandoned and cleared, the old Novartis site is currently transforming according to a masterplan that proposes a step-by-step demolition and replacement of everything existing in order to set up a completely new district pattern in the future. Situated on a parking garage, the park is separated from its underlying natural geology. Nevertheless, Vogt Landscape Architects also read the site as part of a larger geological formation, reaching far out of the area of control, including the whole monumental Jura terraces sloping down to River Rhine, with their typical shapes of erosion. Accordingly, the site is not edited, as there was nothing left to edit, but written as a fragment of this bigger erosion landscape, reinstalling its geomorphologic structure, processes and atmospheres (Fig. 8). The site is also read as a part of a larger vegetation system, namely the Jura forest. It is again written as a fragment of this specific forest, using its materials and structures, and recreating its atmosphere.

Here, design equals the set up of a missing fragment of a larger site (the area of influence), as the construction site itself (the area of control) is nothing but a tabula rasa. The area of influence undergoes a meticulous scientific analysis and a bodily exploration, in order to capture structures, materials, species, patterns, processes, and also atmospheres. The site is written as found in the surroundings, as a miniature artifice of what has been observed in the bigger natural surround. The intervention is most intensive and covers every single square metre of the relatively small project area, reconnecting it morphologically and atmospherically with its surrounding landscape structures. The landscape architect acts as a fieldworker, a natural scientist, a kind of Humboldt, and at the same time as a romantic, a poet, a kind of Büchner, adding a transcendental aspect to the otherwise strictly empirical enterprise.

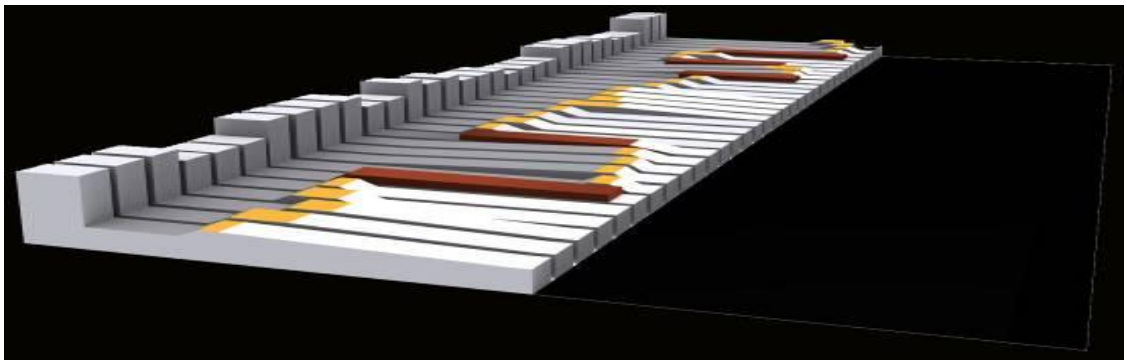
Fig. 8. Basel/ Novartis Campus Park (Photo: Lisa Diedrich 2011)
Novartis Pharma is a merger of different pharmaceutical companies situated in Basel. The St Johann site, to the north of Basel's city centre and touching the French border in the north, sits exactly on the left banks of river Rhine. The former industrial St Johann port is abandoned and in the process of being completely cleared (soil decontamination). Here Novartis is developing its new headquarters, a kind of private city within the city, according to a masterplan drawn up by Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani. Except for a small fringe along the Rhine that will remain public, the port grounds have been incorporated into the Novartis campus. The campus park, commissioned directly from Vogt landscape architects in 2007, occupies 63 000 square metres in the southern part of the site around the main entrance and is mainly situated on top of an underground parking garage.

Case 4: Antwerp-Scheldt Quays

In this project, Proap landscape architects face the fact that structures and materials of the actual quays have to be removed because of the construction of a new dyke assuring flood protection. Nevertheless, they read the site as found, as a spatial and mental figure shaped by multiple actors and processes over time, a composition of overlapping structures, materials, practices, atmospheres, memories. The landscape architects read the pure material features, the ones that have to disappear, as minor part of the site (the area of control) which emcompasses a much broader realm, namely the city, the port and the river (the area of influence) with all its constituting elements. Aspects of these constituting elements are synthesized into an "embryo of a syntax", i.e. the basic cell of the design project. In order to grow this embryo, the landscape architects develop a game to play with many actors, and they refuse to draw up a definitive master plan. Their game consists of a set of quay typologies featuring different sections with different uses, always negotiating between water and humans as including the varying flood levels of the river. These building blocks can be composed by the clients according to their needs and wishes over time, with a great flexibility for appropriation, in order to shape a new mature strip of quays assuring flood protection and urban life equally (Fig. 9).

The designers write rules for site composition instead of writing the site itself. They propose to consider the site as a keyboard to be played both by the river (flood levels) and the city (authorities, inhabitants, other stakeholders). Design is understood as an evolutive site composition, as a game with fixed rules but no predefined result, with the landscape architects as the game masters.

Fig. 9. Antwerp Scheldt Quays (Drawing: Proap)
The Antwerp quays, situated in front of the historic city, have to be adapted to prescriptions of the updated national flood protection and a new dyke has to be installed, rising up to 9,25m above sea level, which means to a height of 2,25m above the ground level of the city. This intervention will not only obstruct views from the city to its river and make relationships difficult but also require the removal of today's strip of quays, a 23 000 square metre port wasteland with lots of traces and memories of its industrial past, complete with improvised uses and a slowly establishing urbanity. In order to reconquer this waterfront while making it flood resistant, the city of Antwerp commissioned a multidisciplinary team led Proap landscape architects with WIT and D-RECTA on a competition entry that, instead of a definitive design scheme, proposes a toolkit of possible quay modules that can be combined to form the new waterfront profile in a participative and step-by-step process involving multiple stakeholders.

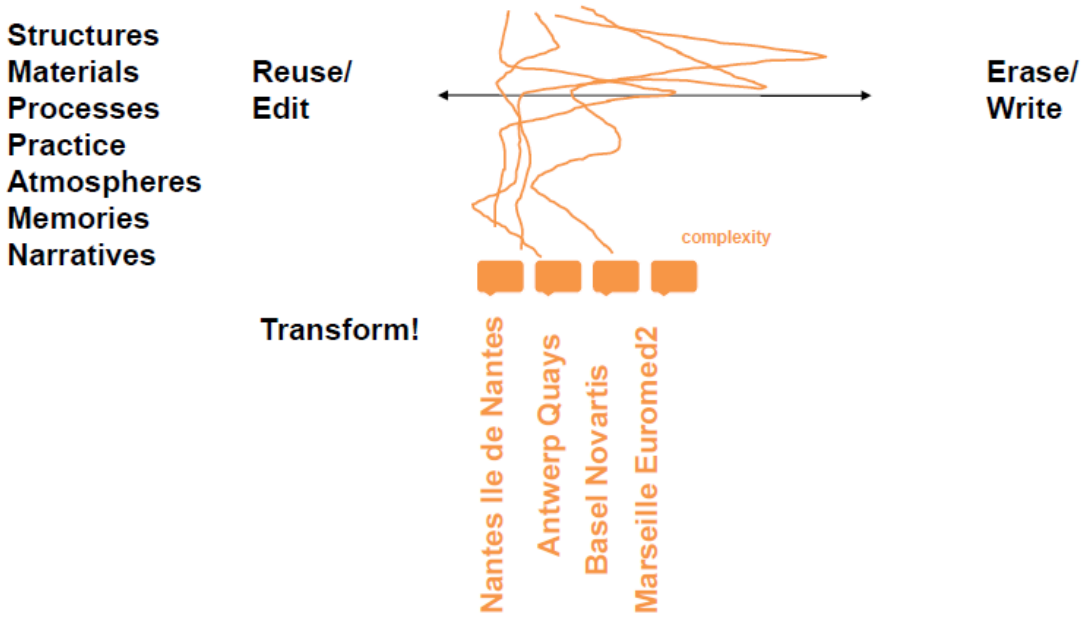


Site-specific design: design is transformation, site is transscalar

When ranking the assessed cases onto the formerly established museification-total make-over scale, this time defining their position according to every single parameter of site-specificity (structures, materials, processes, practices, atmospheres, memories,

narratives), the result is astonishing: All of the cases are situated far from the total make-over pole, with single measures reaching out to it, but the majority of them identifying the cases as transformation projects rather than as tabula rasa designs (Fig. 10). Even those cases that found themselves confronted with the condition of a material tabula rasa (Basel, Antwerp), show high grades of site-specificity on other than the material parameters. Therefore, all of the cases can be considered as site-specific design, refusing a tabula rasa approach and identifying as transformative design, with transformation by its nature being relational design, relating the before with the after. Consequently, one alternative to the global tabula rasa answer to the problem of harbour transformation is to suggest site-specific design, as found in landscape architecture, and to promote an understanding of design as transformation.

Fig. 10. Site-specific design: design as transformation (drawing: Lisa Diedrich)

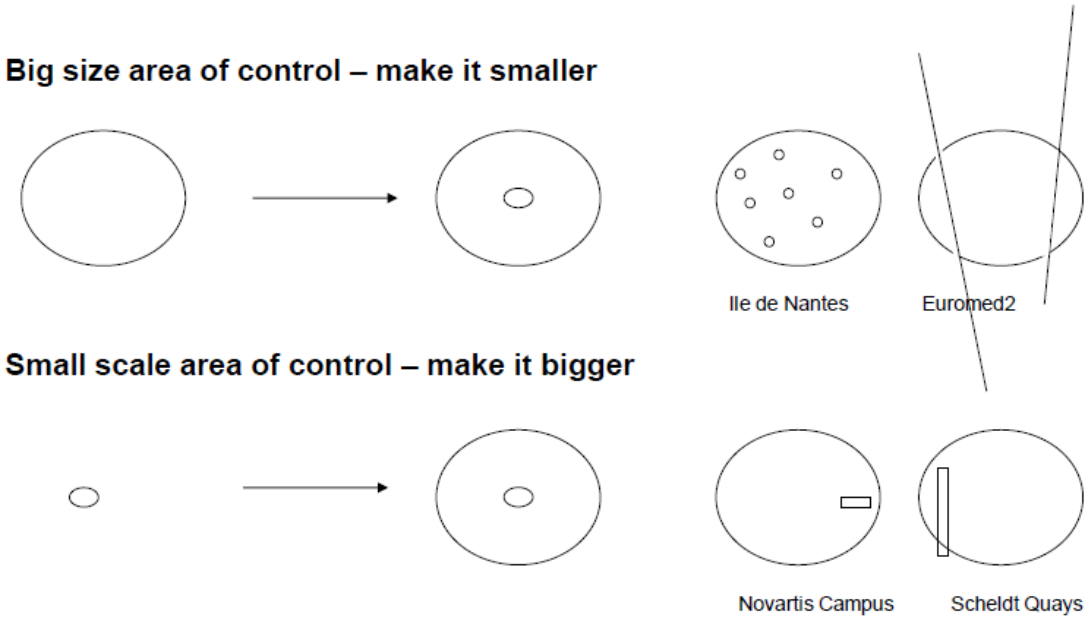


When looking closer into the methods that helped the landscape architecturally inspired teams intervening in a site-specific way, one recognizes their definition of site as something much more complex than the area that has been given to them as the proper project site, the area of control. If the area of control is immense (Nantes, Marseille) and refutes any kind of intensive all-over intervention, the designers "make it smaller" by selecting within the overwhelming area smaller sectors of intervention, suitable in size for setting up a more detailed design project. In Nantes, punctual interventions are scattered over the whole of the Ile de Nantes, in Marseille, two bold linear interventions are bracketing the extended Euromed2 site. The project site, originally the area of control, is mutating into a kind of area influence, whereas the points or strips of intervention turn into more controllable areas of control. If the project area was represented as a big circle, the designers would add a small dot inside it in order to define their area of intervention.

If the area of control is little (Basel, Antwerp) and refutes any kind of relational design because of its barrenness, the landscape architecturally inspired teams "make it bigger" in broadening their view onto the greater surrounds and selecting a less restricted frame enabling them to extract their design concept from, and to relate their design project to it. In Basel, the St. Johann area on the left bank of River Rhine is opened up onto the

geomorphology of the Jura terraces, in Antwerp, the Scheldt Quays are extended into the contexts of the river and its flood levels, the city with its structures and its history, and the people with their practices and wishes. The area(s) of influence are so to say included into the area of control, the project site, as a design intervention without relation to something found on site wouldn't make any sense. If the project area was depicted as a small dot, the designers would draw a big circle around it in order to define the site from which they extract their design concept. This figure corresponds exactly to the one described above, which means that regardless of the area of control being small or big, cleared or built-up, the designers always consider their sites in need of all scales, zooming in or out of the material and immaterial boundaries of the proper project area (Fig. 11). Therefore, when proposing site-specific design/ design as transformation as an alternative to the global same-same answer to harbour transformation, it seems appropriate to promote its *conditio sine qua non*: an understanding of site in all its complexity as a transscalar figure.

Fig. 11. Site-specific design: site as a transscalar figure (drawing: Lisa Diedrich)



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